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THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

National Intelligence Officers

12 October 1979

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence
Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

THROUGH : Deputy Director for National Foreign Assessment

FROM : National Intelligence Officer for Latin America

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Argentina: Abortive Army Revolt (U)

The failure of the attempt last weekend by hardline Argentine III Corps Commander Menendez to oust moderate Army chief Viola should strengthen President Videla's hand in dealing with remaining hardline opponents of his government's policies. Viola--heir apparent to the presidency--undoubtedly was chosen as the target for the revolt because of his staunch support of these policies.

The bloodless revolt, which began early on 30 September with a demand for Viola's resignation, apparently was triggered by the release and deportation last week of former La Opinion newspaper publisher Jacobo Timerman. The decision to free Timerman, who was viewed by the hardliners as a close collaborator of Argentina's once powerful leftist guerrilla movement, reportedly had sharply increased frictions in the military hierarchy.

Menendez and other members of his faction, who have accused Videla and Viola of being soft on subversion, opposed the government's invitation last month to an Organization of American States mission to investigate widespread human rights violations. They also have bitterly attacked Videla's decision to pursue a negotiated settlement to the Beagle Channel conflict with Chile and have been constant critics of the government's economic measures.

How strongly the government will press its advantage in the wake of the failed revolt is unclear. Menendez has been relieved of his command, but no punishment has been set. His forced retirement seems a certainty. A formal court martial for Menendez could signal a general housecleaning of hardline opponents within the military.

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